Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. – 14. (Canceled)

15. (Previously presented) Method, comprising:

using a digital data channel to store input data to a data storage medium;

subsequently using the digital data channel to obtain output data from the medium;

after storing the input data in the using step, arranging the input data into a selected digital configuration from a plurality of different selectable digital configurations;

arranging the output data into the selected digital configuration; and

comparing the output data arranged in the selected digital configuration with the input data arranged in the selected digital configuration to determine an error rate performance.

16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15 wherein the comparing step is characterized by using a first error correction code (ECC) encoding methodology based on the selected digital configuration.

17. (Previously presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the comparing step is characterized by determining a number of errors in the output data in relation to a selected

number of errors that can be detected by the first error correction code (ECC) encoding methodology.

18. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the arranging the input and output data steps are characterized by sequences of multibit symbols each having a selected symbol length.

19. (Previously presented) The method of claim 18 wherein the arranging the input and output data steps are characterized by sequences of multibit symbols each having a second selected symbol length.

20. (Previously presented) The method of claim 19 wherein the comparing step is characterized by predicting error rate performance using a second error correction code (ECC) encoding methodology based on the second selected symbol length.

21. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15 wherein the arranging the input and output data steps are characterized by performing run length limited (RLL) encoding upon the input data and inhibiting RLL decoding of the output data to reflect said RLL encoding.

22. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the arranging the input and output data steps are characterized by arranging the data into a plurality of interleaves.

23. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15 comprising concurrently inhibiting and emulating selected operation of the digital data channel.

24. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15 wherein the comparing step is characterized by predicting the error rate in relation to only one selected digital configuration of the input and output data.

25. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15 wherein the comparing step is characterized by predicting the error rate in relation to two or more selected digital configurations of the input and output data.

26. (Previously presented) The method of claim 18 wherein the comparing step is characterized by predicting the error rate in relation to differences between the input sequence and the output sequence.

27. – 30. (Canceled)